

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 IO-10 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00

INRE-00 CIAE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05

PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 AID-05 SY-05 SCCT-01 OPR-02

OC-05 CCO-00 SCS-03 SCA-01 SAM-01 SAB-01 OMB-01 A-01

EB-07 /105 W

----- 088449

O R 281135Z MAY 75

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4529

DIA WASHDC IMMEDIATE

CIA WASHDC IMMEDIATE

INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY ANKARA

AOEMBASSY ATHENS 5185

USINT BAGHDAD UNN

AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE

AMCONSUL DHAHRAN

AMCONSUL ISTANBUL

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

HUQMRA/AMEMBASSY JIDDA 7708

AMEOBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMCONSUL STUTTGART

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

USCINCEUR

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 6751

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STUTTGART FOR ELG

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, PINT, PGOV, LE

SUBJECT: LEBANON SITUATION REPORT AS OF 1000 GMT, MAY 28

REFS: BEIRUT 6698 AND 6724

1. HOPES FOR QUIET NIGHT IN BEIRUT WERE LITERALLY BLASTED AROUND 2000 HOURS LOCAL MAY 27 WHEN HEAVY FIRING (INCLUDING ROCKET AND MORTAR) RESUMED IN VARIOUS PARTS OF CITY-- ASHRAFIYYAH, AIN RUMMANEH, MAZRAA, QUARANTINA, DEKWANEH-TEL ZAATAR AND SABRA QUARTEHS PRINCIPALLY--AND CONTINUED WITHOUT LET-UP THROUGHOUT NIGHT. IT BECAME SPORADIC BY MORNING MAY 28 AND REPORTEDLY HAS NOW STOPPED AGAIN ALMOST COMPLETELY. THERE IS NO CLEAR INFO AS TO WHO WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR RENEWING THE SHOOTING, BUT PHALANGIST AND FEDAYEEN COMBATANTS, AS WELL AS LEBANESE SECURITY FORCES AND LEFTIST ELEMENTS ALL CONTRIBUTED TO ENSURE ANOTHER VERY NOISY NIGHT. RANDOM SNIPING APPEARED TO BE ON INCREASE THIS MORNING THROUGHOUT BEIRUT, AND MANY QUARTERS--ESPECIALLY PHALANGIST-HELD ASHRAFIYYAH--ARE STILL FULL OF ROADBLOCKS/BARRICADES WITH ARMED MEN IN STREETS. SPORADIC SMALL ARMS FIRE HAS BEEN REPORTED ALONG AND ACROSS MAIN ROAD LEADING TO AIRPORT, AND GOL AUTHORITIES FOR FIRST TIME SINCE TROUBLE BEGAN EIGHT DAYS AGO PREVENTED INCOMING AIRLINE PASSENGERS FROM TRAVELING INTO TOWN DURING HOURS OF DARKNESS. WE HAVE NO INFO AS YET RE CASUALTIES INCURRED IN COURSE OF LAST 24 HOURS.

2. AIRPORT OTHERWISE OPERATING NORMALLY, ALTHOUGH PANAM ADVISES IT HAS PULLED OUT ALL ITS OVERNIGHTING CREWS AND WILL HENCEFORTH CHANGE CREWS AT ISTANBUL INSTEAD OF BEIRUT. AMERICAN COMMUNITY SCHOOL OPENED TODAY, HOWEVER, CLASSES AT AMERICAN UNIVERSITY ARE THEORETICALLY (I.E., WITH VERY POOR ATTENDANCE) STILL BEING HELD, AND A FEW LOCAL RESIDENTS CAN BE SEEN MOVING WARILY ABOUT IN QUIETER PARTS OF TOWN. OUR ADVICE TO AMERICAN COMMUNITY REMAINS AS STATED PARA 2 BEIRUT 6698. WE ESTIMATE MORE THAN 100 SHIPS ARE GANGED UP WAITING TO ENTER BEIRUT HARBOR (PORT ENTRANCE RESEMBLES OLD PHOTOS OF ENIWETOK), AND IT HAS BECOME VERY DIFFICULT TO PLACE OUTGOING INTERNATIONAL TELEPHONE CALLS. (INCOMING CALLS APPEAR TO BE GETTING THROUGH, HOWEVER.)

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3. IT HAS JUST BEEN OFFICIALLY ANNOUNCED THAT PRES FRANGIE, FOLLOWING LEGTHY MEETING THIS MORNING WITH SUNNI STRONGMAN RASHID KARAME, HAS DESIGNATED KARAME AS NEXT PRIME MINISTER AND ASKED HIM TO FORM A CABINET. KARAME WILL BE HOLDING CUSTOMARY CONSULTATIONS WITH BROAD RANGE OF LOCAL POLITICAL LEADERS BEFORE RETURNING TO PRESIDENTIAL PALACE TONIGHT (OR AT LATEST TOMORROW MORNING) TO PRESENT LIST OF PROPOSED CABINET MEMBERS TO FRANGIE. SPECULATION RE COMPOSITION OF KARAME'S CABINET IS CURRENTLY

INTENSE--WITH PRACTICALLY EVERY NOTABLE FIGURE IN LEBANON BEING MENTIONED IN ONE CONNECTION OR ANOTHER. WHATEVER NEW CABINET'S ACTUAL COMPOSITION, IT WILL PROBABLY BE HERALDED AS COALITION GOVT OF "NATIONAL RECONCILIATION". KARAME HIMSELF SET WELCOME TONE OF MAGNANIMITY AND BROTHERHOOD ON HIS WAY TO PRESIDENTIAL PALACE THIS MORNING, PASSING VIA STREETS OF PHALANGIST ASH-RAFIYYAH WHERE HE WAS ROUNDLY CHEERED BY LOCAL CITIZENRY. THIS GESTURE OBVIOUSLY PLEASED FRANGIE AND PHALANGIST CHIEF PIERRE GEMAYEL, WHO HASTENED TO JOIN PRESIDENT AND KARAME AT THEIR PALACE MEETING.

4. COMMENT: KARAME'S DESIGNATION IS BEING GREETED WITH AUDIBLE SIGHS OF RELIEF ALL OVER THE COUNTRY, PARTICULARLY FROM THOSE WHO HAD FEARED FRANGIE WAS DELAYING IT AS PART OF SOME DEVIOUS SCHEME TO SLIP OUT OF UNDERTAKINGS WHICH HE MAY HAVE GRANTED TO SYRIAN FOUNDER KHADDAM DURING LATTER'S RECENT PEACE-MAKING MISSION HERE. IN ANY EVENT, WE EXPECT NEWS OF KARAME'S SELECTION WILL LEAD TO NOTICEABLE COOLING OF TENSIONS HERE AND IMPROVE SECURITY CONDITIONS FOR TIME BEING. REMAINS TO BE SEEN, OF COURSE, HOW SUCCESSFUL HIS GOVT WILL BE IN RESOLVING FUNDAMENTAL, UNDERLYING PROBLEMS-- ;*943.OST AMONG WHICH IS LEBANESE-PALESTINIAN RELATIONSHIP--WHICH PROMPTED RECENT POLITICAL/CONFESSIONAL DIVISIONS AND STRIFE AND THREATENED TO RIP APART LEBANON'; FRAGILE GRIP ON STABILITY AND SANITY. GODLEY

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